

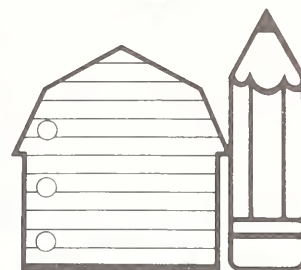
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Ag in the Classroom

Notes

United States
Department of
Agriculture



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A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact: Shirley Traxler, Director, Room 234-W, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. 202/447-5727

Digging Up Soil Conservation Resources

An Interview with Ted Kupelian, Soil Conservation Service

Thanks to the USDA's Soil Conservation Service (SCS), teachers and students around the nation are enjoying a rich collection of conservation materials and activities.

Ted Kupelian, SCS education specialist, has been working with Ag In The Classroom since 1983. The Washington, D.C. office where he works is dedicated to distributing supplemental resources to schools, groups and clubs everywhere. According to Kupelian, the SCS's participation in Ag in the Classroom has given many teachers and students a better understanding of the importance of soil and water conservation. Students are also learning that taking their studies down to earth can be interesting and fun.

Q Describe the SCS's involvement with Ag in the Classroom, and with education in general.

A Everything we do revolves around formal and informal education. To begin with, the SCS was established to offer technical assistance to



Students at Brent Elementary School, Washington, D.C., take a soil sample of their garden for testing.

landowners who manage and use natural resources. But our role as information-providers to educators is just as important. We want to increase awareness and action in natural resource conservation, and working with Ag In The Classroom is a perfect way to do this. The SCS

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Beyond the Groundwork

Comments for "Ag in the Classroom Notes" from Peter C. Myers, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture

As Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and former Chief of the Soil Conservation Service, Missouri native Peter C. Myers possesses a great appreciation of the importance of Ag in the Classroom.

"Today in America, there are approximately 45 million students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Only one and a half million live on farms," he said. "To give these young people an understanding of agriculture and its impact on the world is an enormous undertaking."

Myers believes the Ag in the Classroom program is a perfect vehicle with which to achieve this goal. "As with the Soil Conservation Service, USDA agencies all over the country are working with Ag in the Classroom task forces," he said.

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Peter C. Myers

From the Director

Dear Readers:

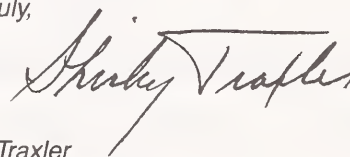
In this issue of Notes you will read about some instructional materials that are available to teachers who are integrating agriculture into their lessons. These items and many others are listed in USDA's Resource Guide to Educational Materials About Agriculture. I want to remind you that this guide is available, free of charge, through the Ag in the Classroom office.

I also want to remind you that the Ag in the Classroom National Conference will be June 7-9, 1987, in Washington, D.C. at the Holiday Inn Capitol. The conference is open to state

contacts, members of Ag in the Classroom task forces, volunteers, and others who are actively involved in Ag in the Classroom programs.

This conference will help you gain an appreciation for the enormous energy and creativity that has poured into the various state programs. It will also give you the opportunity to learn additional skills to apply to your own efforts. I sincerely hope you will be able to attend, and I look forward to seeing you there!

Yours truly,



Shirley Traxler

Soil Conservation Resources

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has been furnishing soil conservation materials to teachers, school administrators, curriculum advisors and youth leaders for over fifty years. SCS's basic program is getting conservation "on the land." Outdoor Classrooms are wonderful teaching tools for demonstrating practices. Ag in the Classroom has certainly facilitated our total conservation efforts.

Q What soil conservation materials are available to teachers?

A Our service has developed an excellent collection of materials for grades K through 12. We encourage science and social studies teachers to take advantage of our publications, overhead transparencies, and suggested activities. A good starting point for teachers who want to introduce soil conservation to their classes would be our field guide, "Teaching Water and Soil Conservation." It's filled with many creative suggestions for activities and observations in the classroom and outdoors. Materials which focus on particular areas of the country are also available through our state offices. Students in South Dakota, for instance, can study the specific wind erosion problems common to their plains area.

Q How are students and teachers responding to your education program?

A Enthusiastically. Teachers are constantly requesting materials, and students show a great interest in soil conservation. Occasionally I travel to schools to talk to classes. Students tell me this field is different and fascinating.

Q How will your involvement in Ag in the Classroom affect soil conservation?

A I hope it will increase awareness of the importance of soil conservation. The wise use of soil and water is the key to keeping our land productive and beautiful. By distributing materials, we're ultimately helping students become better citizens, and perhaps introducing them to different career options.

Q What careers in soil conservation will be open to students in the near future?

A More than meets the eye. Students can study to become soil conservationists and technicians, soil scientists, engineers and engineering technicians. The Soil Conservation Service also offers careers for people trained in accounting, agronomy, recreation, wildlife biology, information and computer technology. Our brochure, "Challenging Careers in Soil Conservation," addresses these opportunities in greater detail.

Q Are there any particular areas of the country where soil conservation awareness among students is more critical?

A Conservation is a nationwide concern. Every area has its unique soil and water problems, so the study of conservation is important to all school districts.

Q Where can teachers write or call for your resources?

A I encourage teachers to first call their nearest SCS office. The address may be found in the telephone book under US Government. If necessary, teachers may also obtain many different resources by writing USDA, Soil Conservation Service, Room 0054-S, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, D.C. 20013.

continued



SCS Soil Profiles show students what's beneath the topsoil.

Q It's science fair season in many school districts. Where can teachers find suggestions and ideas for incorporating soil projects into their fairs and lesson plans?

A An example would be the 35th Annual Convention for the National Science Teachers Association, (NSTA) March 26th - 29th at the Sheraton Washington and Omni Shoreham hotels in Washington, D.C. This convention is a mecca for teachers who are hungry for information and resources. SCS Educational relations will have an exhibit including hands-on activities at the NSTA convention.

Publications related to science fair projects may be available from SCS and other natural resource agencies. These agencies can also suggest many project ideas. Again, making that personal contact is important. Teachers should direct students to the local offices at SCS and other agencies and organizations.

Q Are there any conservation-related current events on which teachers can focus?

A Yes. April 24th is Arbor Day. Anyone interested in trees for their value in conserving soil, energy, water or wildlife is encouraged to participate in Arbor Day activities. Teachers wanting more information can contact the National Arbor Day Foundation, 100 Arbor Avenue, Nebraska City, Nebraska 68410. (402) 474-5655. June 6th is International Environment Day. For information, contact the United Nations Environment Program. UN Plaza, New York 10017. Soil Stewardship Week is scheduled for May 24 - 31. Interested teachers should contact their local soil and water conservation districts.

Q Do you have any other comments regarding soil conservation and Ag in the Classroom?

A Ag in the Classroom presents a wonderful opportunity to teach students about every facet of agriculture. Teachers should be aware that there's room in their existing curriculums for the study of conservation. The USDA is constantly working on new publications and reprinting popular materials. I sincerely hope teachers avail themselves of our resources. All of us at the Soil Conservation Service look forward to helping more teachers educate their students about natural resources and conservation.

SCS resources include lessons and suggested activities for grades K-12.



The Big Sky's the Limit for Montana Enthusiasm

Who is responsible for the success of Agriculture in Montana Schools? Practically everyone in Montana—including English teachers, Kiwanis Club members, a local Coca-Cola plant and the thousands of citizens who check a box on their state tax forms to donate a dollar to the cause.

"I feel like we've got a tiger by the tail!" exclaimed Valerie Larson, resource librarian and publicist for Ag In Montana Schools (AMS). "The enthusiasm sparked by and for Ag In The Classroom is wonderful."

AMS enlisted the aid of English teachers to help "enthuse" students into participating in their current project, an essay contest for seventh through 11th graders. The topic is "Future Careers in Agriculturally-Related Business." Papers are expected to cover such subjects as computers, hydroponics, retailing and marketing. Twenty-five winners (five from each grade) will spend five days this summer at Montana State University, where they can take courses on agriculture-related careers.

Lehrkind Coca-Cola and Dairy Gold Farm are the sponsors of a poster contest for Kindergarten through sixth graders. The three winners of that contest will be the Governor's guest of honor on Ag Day, and each will receive a \$50 bond. The winners of the essay contest will also be announced on Ag Day.

As mentioned elsewhere in this issue, the Kiwanis Club has volunteered to build Ag Treasure Chests. The club plans to reach its goal of having one chest in each elementary school by 1989. At present, each county has its own chest, but over 500 are still needed. The Treasure Chests are used primarily in fourth grade classrooms, but, as Larson says, "so much of the information is nongradeable."

Last year, taxpayers contributed over \$7,000 to AMS via their State tax forms, which allowed them to donate one dollar to the program. This year, a local TV station filmed a 30-second spot featuring a teacher with the Treasure Chest to help promote the contribution.



Ag Treasure Chests: A Gem of an Idea

Thanks to local organizers, elementary school teachers throughout Montana and South Dakota no longer have to dig to find treasures for teaching students about agriculture.

Ag in the Classroom organizers in these states have gathered a hoard of ag teaching tools to form "Ag Treasure Chests." The chests offer a wealth of hands-on materials designed to aid teachers in telling the story of agriculture. The materials include posters, films and booklets, and grain, wool and soil samples.

The Treasure Chests were created through volunteer efforts. State farmers and ranchers, commodity groups, agricultural organizations and agribusinesses donated the materials and funds needed.

Treasure State

Originally "Treasure State" Montana produced only one Treasure Chest per county. It didn't take long before overwhelming teacher and student response convinced Ag in the Classroom organizers to provide one treasure chest for each elementary school in the state.

Montana State Contact and President of Ag in Montana Schools, Nina Baucus, said, "Teachers absolutely love the Treasure Chests! The materials are self-explanatory, which is what any teacher needs to simplify preparation for a lesson!"

Connie Townsend, former president of Ag in Montana Schools, characterized student response to the treasure chest. "They can't get into it fast

enough!"

To help teachers incorporate Treasure Chest activities into ag education, Townsend travels throughout Montana presenting a seminar "Teaching Teachers About Teaching Agriculture." This 10-hour course is offered in conjunction with the Montana State University at Bozeman and counts as 1 graduate credit.

Important contributions are coming from Montana Kiwanis Clubs. Club members are building 550 chests, which will be distributed throughout the state by 1989.

Additional contributions of materials and funds have come from the Soil Department at Montana University, the Cotton Industry, the Montana Aviation Trade Association, the Montana Beef Council, the Wheat Research & Marketing Committee, and from various donations, grants, membership dues and tax check-offs.

South Dakota's Riches

After a successful pilot test in Brookings, South Dakota, 500 Treasure Chests are being distributed to each of the state's elementary schools. South Dakota Soil Conservation Service employees have called on various state commodity groups and farm organizations to assist in the distribution, which should be completed by the end of March.

South Dakota ag organizers have gone to special measures to make their Ag Treasure Chests unique. Mike McNamara, Secretary of South Dakota Ag in the Classroom, said, "We got

Montana teacher Anne Thorson discovers her state's many treasures.



the idea for an Ag Treasure Chest at the national Ag in the Classroom meeting, but decided to shape ours like a barn to more closely associate it with agriculture."

President of South Dakota Ag in the Classroom Edith Bartels said, "We have tried to not limit use of the Treasure Chests to a particular age group. Use of the chests can be extended to many grades."

Commodity groups provided the materials making up the South Dakota Treasure Chest. Among these groups were the South Dakota Sheep Growers, the South Dakota Pork Council, South Dakota Wheat Council and Wheathearts, the South Dakota Beekeepers, and the South Dakota Division of Forestry.

Treasure Chests Reflect States' Shining Individuality

If every state were to build an Ag Treasure Chest, they would most likely be as rich and individualized as the chests of Montana and South Dakota. Each chest's contents reflect differences in both agriculture and teaching approaches:

Montana

Each Montana chest contains such materials as: tree rings showing drought and wet periods, seeds and grain samples, a booklet which traces wool processing and include samples of wool at each stage of the process, a poster showing all the food a family of four consumes in a year, soil samples taken from various parts of Montana, miniature farm equipment, a flannel board of beef byproducts, a "Women in Timber" film, a nutrition packet from the Dairy Industry and samples of the major soils of Montana.

A teacher's guide which accompanies the treasure chest is now being pilot-tested in Montana's 7th and 8th grades. Additionally, a new teaching guide and worksheet combination is being tested for use among Kindergarten through 3rd grade students.

South Dakota

Contents of South Dakota chests include: down, wood chips, soil samples, pig hide, tree seeds, grains, beeswax, wool, powdered milk and potato flakes. Along with these, each Treasure Chest will include an accompanying booklet "South Dakota

Treasures" written by Anne Hunter of the South Dakota Farm Bureau, explaining the uses of agricultural products and byproducts. Some topics covered in the booklet are: popcorn, calves, milk, potatoes and sunflowers.

Clark Hanson, Coordinator of Ag Education at South Dakota State University, is working on an Ag in the Classroom curriculum guide, which will go hand-in-hand with the state's ag Treasure Chests. The guide will present ideas for incorporating agricultural concepts and activities in the classroom.

South Dakota's unique barn-shaped treasure chest.



Beyond the Groundwork

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"Cooperation between these agencies and educators, state officials, farmers, agribusinesses and other groups has been growing constantly."

Myers added, "With all of this cooperation and enthusiasm, Ag in the Classroom has made significant progress in building a foundation for agricultural education. I can only predict a generation of agriculture-conscious students."

However, Myers believes there's a lot more ground to cover. He said students need a multi-

faceted understanding of agriculture. "Educators should approach teaching about agriculture with an awareness that their students will one day be making decisions as consumers, elected officials, opinion leaders and business managers. An understanding of Agriculture cannot be simplistic," he said. "Students should realize the critical role it plays in economics, politics, science and culture."

"On behalf of Ag in the Classroom, I encourage all USDA agencies to continue their involvement in education, especially at the local level." Myers added, "Knowledge is the most fruitful seed any of us could ever hope to plant."

National Meat Board Rounds Up Prime Teaching Materials

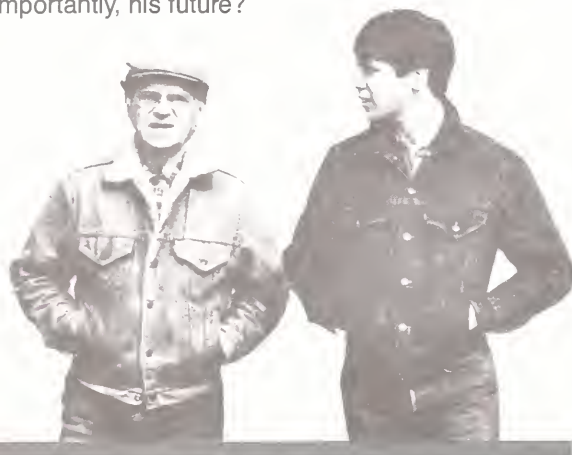
Adam has worked for two summers to save enough money to buy a car. His mother and grandfather need two thousand dollars as downpayment on a new barn for their farm. Will Adam use his hard-earned money to buy the car of his dreams? Or will he invest his money in the family farm, and more importantly, his future?

Pork Council Women. This storybook mystery for second graders stresses the interdependency of city people and farmers. Also aimed at the primary grades is the Food Power Tower Kit, which Selover says is "for little kids to see where food comes from."

Fourth through seventh graders can develop a better appreciation of American agriculture with the Nutrition, Food and Culture program, a series of full-color pictures and a teacher's guide that examines food and nutrition in their everyday lives, and the lives of children of other cultures.

"Shaping A Nation," is a slide presentation for fifth through eighth grades; Selover calls this presentation "an adventure into the unknown!" The "unknown" in this case is the introduction of

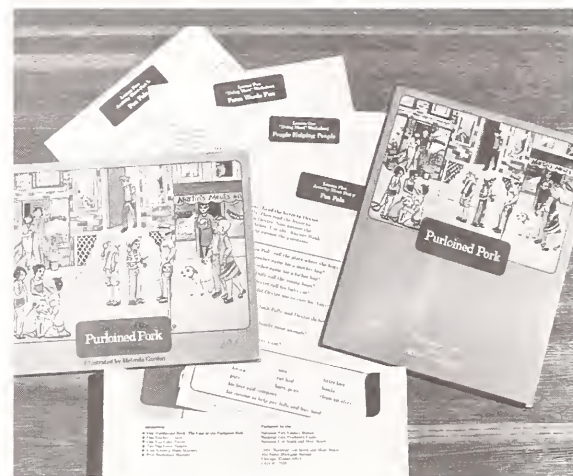
Right: Adam and his grandfather discuss the farm's history and Adam's future in the National Live Stock and Meat Board film, "History Matters — A Story of Change." Below: Adam discusses his dilemma with his girlfriend.



That's the dilemma faced in the National Live Stock and Meat Board production, "History Matters--A Story of Change." The 15-minute film was made by the Meat Board for 11th grade history classes, and about 150,000 students will see the film and discover Adam's decision by the end of the school year.

The film's objective is to introduce "critical thinking and problem-solving," says the group's Director of Education Barbara Hicks Selover, and to show the influence past history can have on present-day decision making.

While "History Matters--A Story of Change," is aimed at high school audiences, the Meat Board has something for everyone. Second graders can solve "The Case of the Purloined Pork," thanks to the combined efforts of the Meat Board, The National Pork Producers Council, and the National



"The Case of the Purloined Pork" kit includes a full color storybook, a teacher's guide, worksheets and posters.

economics principals to grade school students. The slide show begins by explaining how livestock first came to the United States, and goes on to explore the lives of two modern-day farmers, what they grow, and why. A "Partners in Production" poster, part of the "Shaping a Nation" kit, illustrates the great many jobs a farmer makes possible. Over 11,000 kits have been distributed to schools since 1984.

Food preservation methods of the pilgrims is the subject of a poster called "Coming to America: Tracing the Roots of Processed Meats." Students not only learn about the foods the first settlers brought to America, but about the meat preservation techniques of the 1600's that are still in use today. Over 300,000 posters were distributed initially as an insert in *Instructor* magazine, and the Mayflower Society has purchased posters and sent them to fifth grade classrooms in 20 states.

For more information on National Livestock and Meat Board teaching aides, contact Barbara Hicks Selover at (312) 467-5520. "History Matters--A Story of Change," can be loaned to High School Social Studies teachers through the Modern Talking Picture Service. Other teachers interested in the film should contact Selover directly.

Spotlight

Food for America: FFA Provides a Ready Resource

Most consumers don't understand the path that takes raw agricultural commodities from farms to supermarket shelves or the local restaurant. Through Food for America, Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapters across the nation are helping elementary teachers take some of that mystery out of the food system for their students.

FFA's ten-year old Food for America program is designed to teach simple agricultural concepts to students in the third, fourth and fifth grades.

The Turner Ashby Chapter in Dayton, Virginia, is a perfect example.

Armed with their agricultural knowledge, public speaking skills, and a recently revised set of Food for America materials, FFA members from the Turner Ashby Chapter are among the thousands of FFA high school students who present the facts about agriculture in a style that is easily understood and encourages class participation.

For Turner Ashby, the process starts in the fall when a committee is formed and a chairman selected. In the spring, the committee divides into presentation teams of four members each and rehearsal begins. "You're going to have to learn the material before you can even begin to teach it to somebody else," advises committee chairman Carissa Shiflet. She uses the prepared script found in the Presenter's Guide packet of materials, but

suggests rewriting it to suit the particular situation.

At the end of April, the presentation teams hit the fourth-grade classrooms with a well-polished, but extemporaneous presentation. The trick of being well-prepared without sounding too canned or rigid is an important one, according to Carissa. "When we do the Food for America program, we don't make it a big, formal presentation. If the kids interrupt and get involved, as long as it pertains to the subject, we let them."

The Turner Ashby Chapter supplements their Food for America program with an agricultural mini-fair, held one week after the classroom presentations. Grade school students are taken on guided tours of various agricultural exhibits such as dairy cattle, farm machinery, and crops.

The mini-fair serves as an extra opportunity for the children to get more hands-on knowledge of agriculture. It also provides feedback to the chapter. "If a student asks a lot of questions at the fair that we should have covered in the classroom, we try to come up with a new way to get through to them," explained Carissa. "It's a way to gauge ourselves."

NOTE: To arrange for an FFA presentation, elementary school teachers can contact vocational ag instructors at their local junior and senior high schools.



Turner Ashby FFA member Tina Sheffer brings agriculture into the classroom with FFA's newly revised Food for America program materials.

FFA's new Food for America resources include a presenter's guide, classroom kit, spirit master worksheets, puzzles, wall chart, certificates of completion and stickers for the students.

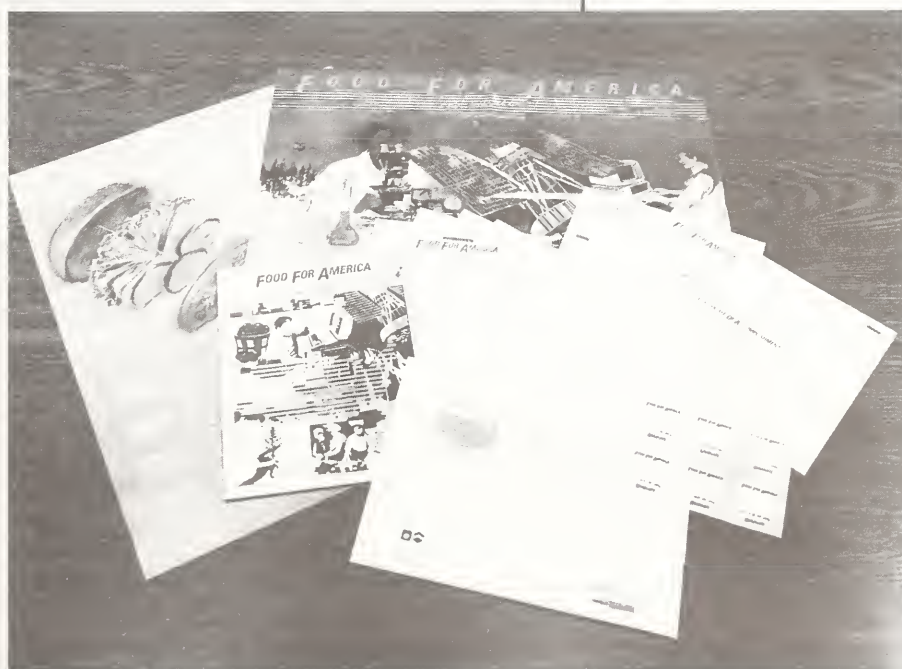
FFA's New Food for America Materials

FFA's Food for America program is funded by Mobay Chemical Corporation through the National FFA Foundation. The materials were prepared by the Mazer Corporation, specialists in the field of educational instruction materials. Two main components of the program are the Presenter's Guide and the Classroom Kit.

The Presenter's Guide includes a script for making classroom presentations and tips on how to prepare for the program. A word-search puzzle is included as a beginning activity.

The Classroom Kit contains a guide to the entire program for the elementary school teacher and is filled with activities relating the story of agriculture while incorporating the disciplines of geography, math, English and social studies.

FFA's Food for America materials may be obtained from the National FFA Supply Service, Box 15160, Alexandria, VA 22309, 703/360-3600, ext. 20. For information about the materials and the Food for America program, contact Bill Stagg, Director of Information, 703/360-3600, ext. 64.



Ag in the Classroom — State Contacts

The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

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